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Greece

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I. Methodology and consultation process

1. The purpose of this report is to present in a concise, but comprehensive, and objective manner the main developments, achievements and challenges in the field of human rights protection since 2011, year of Greece's first review. The drafting of the report was coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in close cooperation with all Ministries involved in the promotion and protection of human rights. An open invitation to a public consultation with civil society representatives of the General Secretariat for Transparency and Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights was posted on the Ministry's website on 15 December 2015 and was widely disseminated. The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) has also informed its members about the consultation. A public hearing of civil society organizations (CSOs) who had submitted written comments following the above-mentioned invitation was held on 25 January 2016, organized by the General Secretariat for Transparency and Human Rights. In addition, the draft report was submitted to the NCHR. Views expressed by CSOs and the NCHR were taken into consideration in the drafting of the final report.

2. The report focuses on the implementation of the recommendations accepted by Greece in the context of the first-cycle of the UPR. It is to be recalled that Greece had supported 111 recommendations, while it was not able to accept 14. In June 2014, Greece submitted a voluntary mid-term progress report of the implementation of the accepted first cycle UPR recommendations. In the present report, we have divided the accepted recommendations into thematic areas and have structured accordingly he combined Sections D and E of the report.

II. Developments since the previous review in background of the country – promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

Main developments since the first cycle

3. During the last six years, Greece has been experiencing a severe economic crisis, which is an aspect of the broader crisis affecting many European countries. The policy frameworks aiming at responding to the crisis consisted to a large extent in the adoption of austerity measures, following negotiations with the institutions involved, the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The impact of the economic recession has been significant, resulting in social upheavals and threatening the disruption of the social fabric. GDP fell by 25%, the unemployment rate reached 24,6%, youth unemployment 49,5% and child poverty 28,8%. Also, since 2008 the material deprivation index has been significantly increased and it is higher than the EU average; material deprivation does not concern only the population at poverty risk, but also part of the non-poor population. The NCHR has consistently drawn the attention of national authorities and international stakeholders to the need to respect human rights during the implementation of the fiscal and social exit strategy from the debt crisis. In its latest statement, dated 15.7.2015, the NCHR stressed that the relevant rules of the international or European mechanisms involved cannot circumvent the obligation to respect international and European human rights law, which is binding on all States participating in such mechanisms. CSOs have also pointed out the adverse impact of the economic crisis on the enjoyment of human rights, in particular of those belonging to the most vulnerable sectors of the society (unemployed, persons with disabilities, older persons, children etc.) and the capacity of the authorities to fulfill human rights. Since January 2015, the Government has

adopted measures to tackle the "humanitarian crisis" affecting the most disadvantaged groups of the population (see infra, paras. 15 et seq.). Greece is currently implementing an Agreement reached with its partners in August 2015 and is striving, while implementing the Agreement, to offset the recession trends and to protect the rights of those in the most vulnerable situations, working towards creating a new production model based, inter alia, on respect for and protection of labor, and the redistribution of the tax burden. The abovementioned Agreement contains a commitment to initiate a substantial debate on how to deal with the problem of the sustainability of the Greek public debt, an issue critical to the course of the Greek economy.

4. The strong migratory pressure traditionally facing Greece due to its geographic position at the external border of the EU has evolved to a migration/refugee crisis in 2015, with more than 800,000 persons, most of whom refugees, reaching the Greek islands of the Eastern Aegean. Greece has made tremendous efforts to rescue those people in need and receive them in a humane way in the frontline islands, with the aid and mobilization also of the local population (see infra, paras. 25 et seq.). It is clear that a long-term comprehensive strategy is needed to deal with all aspects of a problem, which also has a European dimension. In this respect, the NCHR has put strong emphasis on the need to redesign EU's asylum policy and the Dublin III Regulation system on asylum issues.

5. Greece has witnessed, during the period 2012-2013, an important surge in the number of attacks against foreigners living in Greece by extremist organizations or individuals attempting to exploit the discontent of some segments of the population severely affected by the economic crisis, against the background of a sharp increase in irregular migration. Laws and policies have been adopted as a response to acts of violence, which are contrary to and undermine the fundamental values underpinning the country's democratic society (see infra, paras. 39 et seq.). Other stakeholders have also responded to the challenges raised by the increase in racist violence, in particular through the creation by the NCHR and the Office of the UNHCR in Greece, in 2011, of the "Racist Violence Recording Network" (RVRN) in which participate 38 NGOs and other bodies, having as a primary goal the documentation of racist incidents.

National action plans (recommendation 84.9)

6. The first National Action Plan on Human Rights, covering the period 2014-2016, has been prepared, under the coordination of the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights. The Ministry, through its General Secretariat for Transparency and Human Rights, is currently examining ways and means of further developing an effective, inclusive and operational human rights planning mechanism, taking also into account the relevant recommendations of the NCHR. CSOs have stressed the need for the adoption of a National Action Plan in the form of a comprehensive strategy document, incorporating specific and prioritized commitments on the part of the authorities, the implementation of which should be entrusted to an effective mechanism.

7. Moreover, a National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child is being elaborated, under the coordination of the General Secretariat of Transparency and Human Rights, with the participation of all sectors of the Administration involved and the Children's Ombudsman. The plan will be submitted to public consultation with civil society actors.

8. A recent law provides for the establishment of a "National Board against Racism and Intolerance", an inter-ministerial body with the participation of independent bodies (such as the NCHR and the Greek Ombudsman) and civil society stakeholders, tasked, inter alia, with the drafting of a National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance.

National human rights institutions (recommendation 84.9)

9. The National Commission for Human Rights has been very active, during the reporting period, in discharging its tasks. In particular, the NCHR has adopted, since 2010, a number of recommendations to national authorities and international stakeholders on the adverse impact of the economic crisis on the enjoyment of human rights, focusing both on the national and the European dimensions of the crisis. The NCHR has also paid particular attention to the fight against racism. In addition, it has adopted recommendations and reports on a wide variety of issues, including the right to water, protection of children's and older persons' rights, gender identity, citizenship, etc. The work and the recommendations of the NCHR are very often referred to in the reports of universal and regional human rights mechanisms and the decisions and judgments of quasi-judicial and judicial bodies. The competent authorities take duly into account the recommendations of NCHR in the legislative and administrative procedure. Moreover, a recent legislative amendment has further strengthened the NCHR in the accomplishment of its mission.

10. The Greek Ombudsman has continued to play a major role in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. A significant number of the Ombudsman's recommendations have been followed by the Administration. Furthermore, the Ombudsman has been designated as the "national preventive mechanism" under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which Greece ratified in 2014, and operates, since 2014, as the external monitoring body for the removal procedures of third-country nationals It is expected that the responsibilities of the Ombudsman as an equality body will be strengthened through the revision of the anti-discrimination Law 3304/2005.

Cooperation with NGOs and civil society (recommendations 83.16, 83.75)

11. The competent authorities cooperate with NGOs and civil society organizations in a number of fields, in particular the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, including unaccompanied children, assistance to persons in vulnerable situations due to the economic crisis, fight against trafficking in human beings, promotion and protection of women's and children rights, etc. NGOs are consulted in the preparatory stage of significant legislative initiatives, such as, recently, the law on the "civil partnership pact", which has been extended to same-sex persons. Moreover, the Racist Violence Recording Network, consisting of 33 NGOs (see paras. 5 and 45) participates in the National Board against Racism and Intolerance end the Working Group on Racist Violence. Finally, six of the most representative NGOs are members of the National Commission of Human Rights.

Implementation of recommendations (recommendations 83.14, 83.15, 83.96)

12. The competent authorities thoroughly examine and take fully into consideration the recommendations of all human rights protection mechanisms, including special procedures, and engage in a constructive follow-up dialogue with all mandate-holders.

13. The outcome of the first review under the UPR mechanism was translated into Greek and served as one of the main background documents for the drafting of periodic reports to human rights treaty bodies and the elaboration of national human rights action plans. Furthermore, Greece is committed to ensuring the translation into Greek and the wide dissemination of the UPR recommendations, the concluding observations of human

rights treaty bodies following the consideration of the national reports, as well as other relevant recommendations issued by human rights protection mechanisms. It is to be noted that the recent concluding observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the ICESCR and the Human Rights Committee of the ICCPR were translated into Greek by the NCHR and posted on the Commission's website.

III. Follow-up to the previous review: achievements, challenges and constraints

Ratification of international instruments (recommendations 83.1, 83.2, 83.3, 83.4, 83.5, 83.6, 83.7, 83.8, 84.3, 84.4, 84.5, 84.6, 84.7, 84.8)

14. Since the first cycle of the UPR, Greece has ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (Law 4074/2012); the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Law 4228/2014) and designated the Greek Ombudsman as the National Preventive Mechanism; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Law 4268/2014); the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (Law 4216/2013). In January 2016, Parliament adopted a law ratifying the Council of Europe revised European Social Charter.

Protection of economic, social and cultural rights (recommendation 83.29)

15. As already stressed, the economic crisis has had a negative impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular. With the aim to preserving social cohesion and addressing the vast social inequalities, the Government is taking measures to protect the most vulnerable segments of the population. In particular, Law no.4320, adopted in March 2015 on addressing the "humanitarian crisis", ensures the enjoyment of basic goods and services to persons and families living under extreme poverty conditions without any discrimination, through the provision of free electricity, rent allowance and food stamps; the law has already benefited around 300.000 persons. Furthermore, since mid-November 2014, Greece has implemented a pilot Guaranteed Minimum Income scheme in 13 municipalities, addressed to individuals and families living in conditions of extreme poverty. The Government is planning to gradually start implementing a national minimum income scheme (as from April 1st 2016), with a view to reaching its full implementation throughout the country by the end of 2016. At the same time, the National Strategy for Social Inclusion (NSSI) sets the ground in order to reform policies on tackling poverty, social exclusion and discriminations and attempts to prioritize the reforms of the social protection system as well as to introduce a common framework of coordination, monitoring and evaluation of all relevant interventions.

Right to work

16. As documented by the NCHR, international monitoring bodies have pointed out to violations or persistent challenges with regard to respect, protection and fulfillment of labor and pension rights, caused by the austerity measures. The Government's priority is to provide support to the unemployed in order to mitigate the effects of the current economic situation. In the current period and until March 2016, Greece, making full use of the

resources of EU structural funds (although the latter are not sufficient to address the problem of unemployment), implements employment programs for about 110,000 beneficiaries. Public benefit employment schemes are carried out to support 54,000 unemployed people (for the period 2014–2015), helping their integration into the labor market, while improving social services provided to citizens. After March 2016, a revamped public benefit employment scheme will be implemented on a pilot basis for municipalities that experience the highest rates of Long Term Unemployment. Additional integrated interventions are also planned.

Right to health

17. The prolonged economic crisis has had adverse consequences on health care. It is estimated that there are 2,500,000 uninsured citizens and that a large part of the population live below the poverty line, whereas the number and rate of persons with unmet healthcare needs has increased sharply. Furthermore, the health system of Greece is under-financed, a fact also deplored by the NCHR, given that the public health expenditure as GDP percentage is approximately 4.5%, much lower in comparison with the EU average of 7.5%. The Government's aim is to bring the level of spending gradually closer to the EU average, thereby ensuring universal access to health care, while also establishing a resilient primary health care system that is able to respond to current challenges. In this vein, the Government has decided to increase the public health care 2016 budget and cover uninsured citizens.

Rights of persons with disabilities (recommendation 83.4)

18. Following the ratification of the CRPD, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity has been designated by virtue of a Prime Minister's decision, as the focal point for monitoring the implementation of the Convention, in cooperation with a network of competent bodies within the Administration, and as the coordinating mechanism for facilitating relevant activities. Moreover, the same decision provides, in accordance with Article 33(3) of the Convention, that civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, will be involved and fully participate in the monitoring process. In addition, there are ongoing consultations with the civil society for the establishment of an independent mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Convention. The NCHR and CSOs have expressed their concern about the delay in establishing such independent mechanisms.

19. Furthermore, the abovementioned NSSI will focus on target groups, which face social exclusion or are at increased risk of poverty, including persons with disabilities.

20. As far as accessibility is concerned, Greece has proceeded to the adoption of a new legislative framework, in particular the General Building Regulation and a series of relevant decisions, which ensures the horizontal and vertical access in all new buildings and spaces. According to the law, in order to obtain a building permit, it is mandatory to submit an accessibility plan. For existing buildings, the timeline for the completion of the necessary modifications expires at the end of the year 2020. Moreover, public sector agencies may take the necessary steps, in accordance with the applicable legislation, to establish structures which enable access for people with disabilities. In particular, programs have been implemented to promote the accessibility of persons with disabilities to municipal public buildings. It is also to be noted that the Citizens' Service Centers, tasked with handling an increasing number of transactions with the Administration, must be housed in

places accessible to people with disabilities, as provided for in the General Building Regulation.

21. In the field of education, recent reforms have focused on making the educational system more inclusive. Measures were put in place to ensure that digital educational material was accessible to all students with disabilities or learning difficulties. Special education is available in mainstream schools that had been fitted with appropriate support structures, as well as in special schools. Home teaching programmes are available where necessary. The Greek Ombudsman, however, has expressed concerns about the persistent challenges which relate mainly to the lack of resources (funding and staffing). Benefits and pensions as well as financial reliefs are provided to people with disabilities. The development of supported living housing aims to develop an alternative accommodation in the community for people with intellectual disabilities, avoiding institutionalization and social exclusion, improving their autonomy and social integration.

Child protection

22. The Greek Ombudsman and CSOs have expressed concerns about children in institutions and have stressed the need to reform the legal framework, to ensure effective monitoring and supervision, as well as the promotion of alternative forms of child care. To this end, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity has undertaken a serious commitment to take all necessary measures for the transition from impersonal institutional settings to community-based services in order to support deinstitutionalisation. The Ministry is collaborating with the Children's Ombudsman, CSOs and the European Commission's Structural Reform Support Service, in order to assure that the transition is sustainable.

23. Taking into consideration the UN Guidelines for Alternative Care, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity is preparing a legislative reform, expected to be delivered by the end of 2016, that focuses on establishing common quality standards for the alternative care of children and promoting foster care and small facilities providing residential care organized around the rights and needs of the child, whilst developing preventive strategies to avoid family separation through community based support services. Moreover, children are among the target groups included in the NSSI. CSOs have also stressed the need for systematic data collection on children living in institutions and for a standardised mechanism to investigate allegations of abuse. They have also advocated the abolishment of private adoptions.

International development cooperation (recommendation 83.97)

24. Due to the severe fiscal constraints Greece is facing, development programs have been diminished drastically and the adoption of a new multi-annual development programme as well as a new legislative framework of inter-ministerial cooperation remain pending. However, all Ministries are aware of the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals and will see to apply them at their future development actions.

Asylum seekers, irregular migrants (recommendations 83.10, 83.11, 83.12, 83.65, 83.66, 83.67, 83.68, 83.69, 83.70, 83.71, 83.72, 83.73, 83.74, 83.82, 83.85, 83.86, 83.87, 83.88, 83.89, 83.90, 83.92, 83.93, 83.94, 83.95, 84.18)

25. Greece has been facing a particularly strong migratory pressure due to its geographic position at the external border of the EU, its extensive land and sea borders and its proximity with main countries of origin and transit of irregular migration. The migration/refugee crisis took on unprecedented dimensions in 2015. More than 800,000 persons, most of whom refugees, have reached the Greek islands of the Eastern Aegean, almost twenty four times up compared to 2014. Greece's first reception services and infrastructure are constantly testing their limits, at a time of severe financial constraints due to the economic crisis. The Hellenic Coast Guard has been sparing no effort to save human life at sea, rescuing huge numbers of refugees, more than 100,000 lives in 2015. The government has managed, in an extremely short period of time, to construct appropriate facilities in the broader area of Athens for the temporary accommodation of several refugees. The competent authorities are continuing their efforts to improve reception facilities and screening procedures, to set up "hotspots", in consultation with the European Commission and the relevant European organizations, to facilitate relocation in other EU countries and to ensure appropriate accommodation for a number of refugees, in cooperation with the UNHCR. It is evident that the means at the disposal of the Greek authorities are not sufficient, as pointed out also by CSOs. Greece is working closely with its European partners for a comprehensive approach to a challenge, which has obviously a European dimension.

26. The National Action Plan on the reform of the asylum system and migration management has been implemented for two years (2010–2012). A revised Action Plan, conceived as a "living document", was elaborated in December 2012, with the aim to ensuring access to international protection on the one hand and an effective border management and return system on the other.

27. As foreseen in the Greek Action Plan, a new competent authority responsible for the asylum procedure was established (Law 3907/2011). The Asylum Service started its operations on 7 June 2013 (6 Regional Asylum Offices and 3 Asylum Units operational by the end of 2015). More than 27,000 applications have been lodged so far, with an increase of 33.2% in 2015. The recognition rate (1st instance) stands at 50%, while the average duration of the procedure is three months. The Appeals Authority (2nd instance) has received more than 8,600 appeals, while the rate of positive decisions stands at 15%. The asylum procedure is currently being reviewed in the context of the transposition of the recast Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU) into national law.

28. The First Reception Service (FRS) currently comprises two reception centers, two mobile units, an Open Accommodation Facility for people interested in returning to their country of origin voluntarily and an Open Accommodation Facility for Asylum Seekers, vulnerable persons and third country nationals. The FRS is tasked with recording and validly certifying the identity and origin of third-country nationals, through specialized personnel, while ensuring the registration and medical screening of foreign nationals, and providing information about their rights, including with regard to the asylum procedure, as well as psychological support. Vulnerable persons and asylum seekers are referred to the appropriate structures. First Reception Centers are not detention centers. Irregular migrants may stay therein up to fifteen days, the maximum number of days required for the referral to the appropriate structure; only in exceptional circumstances, an extension of the stay up to twenty five days may be ordered, by a duly reasoned decision.

29. In addition, seven pre-removal detention centers are operating in different regions of the country. In such centers foreign citizens under an expulsion/return order may be detained, whose return in their country of origin is possible The foreign citizens in question are provided with medical and psychological support, interpretation services and free legal assistance. A Joint Ministerial Decision, dated 21.01.2015, regulates matters relating to the operation of the abovementioned Centers, including the rights and the obligations of detainees.

30. Administrative detention of foreigners under return procedures is imposed only as a last resort. During the last year, measures, welcomed by the UNHCR, have been adopted to improve the situation of irregular migrants under return procedures, such as the release and referral to accommodation facilities of vulnerable groups, the release of persons whose detention exceeds six months, the improvement of detention conditions, the use of alternative measures to detention. Such less restrictive alternatives to detention include the granting of a period for the voluntary departure from the country, under certain conditions, and the participation in Voluntary Repatriation Programmes. CSOs have expressed concerns about the persistent challenges concerning the imposition of detention and detention conditions, which are affected by lack of resources.

31. It is the consistent practice of the competent authorities to investigate all allegations about incidents of ill-treatment and purported "push-back" practices. In the event that such allegations were confirmed, the personnel involved would be liable to disciplinary sanctions. Nevertheless, for the effective investigation of complaints, it is necessary that the competent authorities have sufficient information and that they are promptly notified of the incident. The measures taken by the Hellenic Police to prevent violations of the principle of *non-refoulement* include, *inter alia*. cooperation with Frontex, the creation of an officials' network aimed at the protection of fundamental rights within the country's Police Directorates at the borders, the forwarding of instructions and guidelines to the Regional Services, etc. In the same vein, the Hellenic Coast Guard (HCG) Headquarters has completed the drafting of the "Code of Ethics for HCG Staff", which incorporates the applicable legal standards concerning fundamental rights and the proper implementation of the principle of *non-refoulement*. Moreover, educational and training initiatives have been undertaken in this respect, such as the incorporation of the European Frontex Training Programme in the Training Regulations of the Coast Guards Academy.

Unaccompanied minors (recommendations 83.76, 83.77, 83.78, 83.79, 83.80, 83.81)

32. The protection of human rights of unaccompanied minors (UAMs), who have entered irregularly the Greek territory, is considered as a matter of utmost priority. In the First Reception Centers, UAMS, upon their arrival, are identified, registered and provided with health care treatment and psychosocial support. They are then referred to the Prosecutor for the appointment of a guardian and placement in an open accommodation facility. The National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) is tasked with processing accommodation requests for UAMs. Since 2012, the number of such requests has tripled, reaching more than 2,390 children. The capacity of the accommodation facilities has recently increased with the addition of 94 beds. According to CSOs, the challenges faced by UAMs are more pressing on the islands, due, inter alia, to the lack of adequate accommodation facilities and the difficulties encountered in locating relatives of the children. The Greek Ombudsman has also stressed the need for acceleration of family reunification and asylum procedures involving UAMs and the need for systematic data collection. CSOs have also advocated the abolishment of minors' detention in any case (even as a last resort).

33. The UNHCR and NGOs closely cooperate with the competent authorities and provide to unaccompanied minors all the necessary information about their rights, as well as their access to legal services during their stay in Greece.

34. Despite the considerable efforts of the Greek State, serious challenges remain, such as the malfunction of the institution of guardianship. More specifically, the Public Prosecutors, designated by law as provisional guardians, cannot exercise themselves the rights and obligations of a guardian, due to the limited resources and the great volume of work. For all these reasons, the relevant legislative framework is under review. The Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights is elaborating a national action plan on children's rights, which will focus, *inter alia*, on the protection of unaccompanied children.

Integration of migrants (recommendation 83.84)

35. Law 4251/2014, "Code of Immigration and Social Integration", promotes the integration of migrants, through the simplification of administrative procedures, improvements on issues such as the renewal of residence permits, family reunification, acquisition of residence permits by second-generation migrants and the promotion of the long-term resident status under the relevant EU Directives.

36. Greek authorities have been implementing programs for the integration of third country nationals, mainly through the European Integration Fund and the European Social Fund, as well as initiatives undertaken by municipalities and civil society actors. Such programs included intercultural training for civil servants, intercultural mediation programs, exchanges of best practices, awareness-raising campaigns, promoting capacity building activities of civil servants, etc.

37. At the local level, 53 Migrant Integration Councils are currently running all over the country, with the participation of local social stakeholders on migrant issues, with the aim to identifying integration problems encountered by migrants and submit to the Municipal Council proposals for the smooth integration of local migrant populations.

38. It is also to be noted that Law 4332/2015, amending law 4251/2014, facilitates the acquisition of Greek citizenship by second generation immigrants, setting out criteria related with the enrolment in primary and secondary schools.

Combating racism and racial discrimination and other forms of discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (recommendations 83.23, 83.24, 83.25, 83.26, 83.27, 83.28, 83.30, 83.39, 84.10, 84.11, 84.14)

39. In September 2014, Parliament adopted Law 4285/2014, amending Law 927/1979, with the aim to strengthening the country's criminal anti-racism legislation and adjusting the relevant legislative framework with EU Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA.

40. Law 4285/2014 punishes, inter alia, public incitement to acts or activities which may result to discrimination, hatred or violence against individuals or groups of individuals defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability, in a manner which endanger public order or threatens life, liberty or physical integrity of the abovementioned persons; the establishment of or participation in an organization or union of persons of any kind systematically

pursuing the commission of the abovementioned acts; under the circumstances prescribed by the law, the act of publicly condoning, trivializing or maliciously denying the commission or seriousness of crimes of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, the Holocaust and Nazi crimes, recognized by decisions of international courts or the Hellenic Parliament. The penalties are stricter if these crimes are committed by a civil servant. In addition, the law introduces the administrative liability of legal persons or unions of persons.

41. Penalties for racist crimes have been stiffened. The new article 81A introduced in the Criminal Code raises the minimum penalty and doubles the monetary penalties that may be imposed for racist crimes. Under the same article, the commission of an offense on racist grounds (i.e. on account of race, colour, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity and, as recently added, gender characteristics) constitutes an aggravating circumstance, while law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and judges have the power to investigate and take into consideration the potential racist motivation at all stages of criminal proceedings. A recent legislative amendment facilitates even more the applicability of the abovementioned article 81A. Moreover, a new criminal offence has been established (art. 361B of the Criminal Code) punishing the provision of goods and services with the contemptuous exclusion of a person on racist grounds. In addition, the Council of Europe (CoE) Cybercrime Convention and its Protocol on Xenophobia and Racism will be ratified as soon as possible.

42. The punishable acts under the law, as well as any crimes committed as a result thereof, are prosecuted *ex officio*. Victims of such offenses are exempted from the obligation to pay a fee when submitting a criminal complaint or participating as a civil party in a criminal procedure; non-EU nationals who are victims or material witnesses of racist acts may be granted a residence permit on humanitarian grounds.

43. Moreover, in accordance with Article 2 of Law 4203/2013, state financing of political parties whose leaders or a number of their elected officials are charged with the crime, in particular, of membership of a "criminal organization" and put on pre-trial detention, is suspended by decision taken by the Parliament.

44. Data collection with regard to racist crimes has significantly improved and is expected to further improve following the operation of the new computerization system of the courts. A unified mechanism and database for registering alleged incidents of racist and xenophobic violence (including allegations against police personnel) has been created. In 2014, 80 *prima facie* racist violence incidents were recorded, 19 prosecutions were launched, in 4 cases the defendants were convicted, while 24 cases were filed. In 66 of those incidents, criminal proceedings have been initiated, while disciplinary measures have been taken in 14 cases. More specifically: in 36 incidents, police officers were involved, in 16, citizens, in 11, organized groups, while in 17 of them the offenders remain unknown. Further improvements to the data collection system are under consideration by a Working Group established to this end.

45. It is to be noted that in 2014, the RVRN (see supra, para. 5) recorded 81 incidents of racist violence with more than 100 victims.

46. Along with the strengthening of the legislative framework, a number of measures have been taken at the level of law enforcement, criminal legislation and the justice system. In September 2013, the leader and members (including Members of Parliament) of the political party "Golden Dawn" were placed under judicial investigation for membership of a "criminal organization". In total, almost 70 individuals have been indicted. The trial opened on 20 April 2015 and is closely followed by civil society organizations, with full respect for the right to a fair trial, in particular through the "Golden Dawn Watch" initiative.

47. The most important measures taken in the field of law enforcement are the establishment of two specialized Departments and 68 Offices throughout the country and the operation of a hotline and a web site for complaints about racist violence or information on the rights of the victims; the obligation for police officers to ascertain whether a criminal act has been racially motivated (see circular note dated 8.11.2014); the same applies to the disciplinary investigation of cases involving inappropriate behaviour of police officers against persons belonging to vulnerable groups or foreign nationals; co-ordination with local and non-governmental organizations and training of police staff. In the field of training of police officers and prosecutors, Greece is cooperating with the CoE and the OSCE.

48. Furthermore, two special prosecutors have been appointed in Athens and Piraeus for the investigation of racist crimes.

49. As already mentioned, a recent law provides for the establishment of the "National Board against Racism and Intolerance" (see supra, para. 8), with the participation, inter alia, of the NCHR, the RVRN, the UNHCR and the Greek Ombudsman. The purpose of this Board is the development of a comprehensive anti-racist strategy, the coordination of all relevant stakeholders and the monitoring of the application of international, European and national legislation. A National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance is also among the tasks of the Board. In addition, a mechanism monitoring hate speech will also be designed.

50. Following the measures described above, there has been a sharp decrease in the number of racist or xenophobic acts, in particular those committed by organized groups. Racist acts have been condemned in the strongest possible terms by members of the political leadership of the country, including at the highest political level, conveying an unequivocal message of zero tolerance.

51. With regard to the fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, apart from the inclusion of such grounds in the anti-racism legislation and soon in Law 3304/2005 on equal treatment which is currently amended, the law on the civil partnership pact was recently (December 2015) extended to same-sex couples (Law 4356/2015), recognizing family ties between the parties and conferring rights similar, in many fields, to those deriving from marriage. It is considered that the recognition of same-sex partnerships will contribute to the elimination of social prejudices and stereotypes against LGBTQI persons. Furthermore, art. 347 of the Criminal Code providing a higher age of consent for male homosexual acts was abolished by the same law, effectively resulting in equalization of the age of consent. The NCHR, the Greek Ombudsman and CSOs have highlighted the importance of introducing legislation on legal gender recognition which is already scheduled by the Ministry of Justice. Moreover, LGBTQI CSOs have raised the issue of same sex marriage recognition. While welcoming the reinforcement of its role in the fight against discrimination through the current amendment of L. 3304/2005, the Greek Ombudsman, as well as CSOs, have expressed concerns about persistent challenges on equality and non- discrimination in various fields.

Gender equality
(recommendations 83.9, 83.17, 83.18, 83.19, 83.20, 83.21, 83.22, 83.57, 83.58, 83.59, 83.60)

52. The National Program for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013 (NPSGE) was extended until the end of 2015. A new action plan on gender equality is currently elaborated for the next programming period 2014-2020, through consultations with relevant stakeholders, which takes into consideration all international obligations of the country and

focuses on addressing the challenges arising from the effects of the economic crisis. Special emphasis will be put on issues such as access to labor, eradication of poverty, unemployment, gender-based violence, elimination of gender stereotypes (as a horizontal policy). The Ministry of Interior, through the Social Integration Division, has been implementing in 2015 programs on gender equality, through the European Integration Fund.

53. Despite sustained efforts undertaken to increase the participation of women in the political life and in decision-making positions, through the introduction of quotas in electoral lists and collective bodies and other relevant programs, women continue to be underrepresented. Greece recognizes that further work is needed in that area.

54. The NCHR has repeatedly highlighted the disproportionate impact of the crisis and austerity measures on women, and, in particular, the high female unemployment rates. To tackle women's unemployment, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality is implementing the Project "Supporting NGOs (Women Organizations)". Additional steps have been taken to promote employment opportunities, in the context of the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013. Specific measures have been adopted, targeting women in different age groups who were unemployed or threatened with unemployment. Many of these women have received financial support enabling them to start their own businesses. Also, within the scope of the implementation on the legislation on equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in work and employment (Law 3896/2011), a special education training program for Labour Inspectors has been implemented. Moreover, the Greek Ombudsman has expressed concerns about gender equality mainly in the private sector, pointing out challenges to working women's rights related to the impact of the economic crisis to small and medium businesses.

55. Women members of the Muslim minority in Thrace are fully included in gender equality policies and participate in relevant programs implemented by the competent authorities. Members of the Muslim minority in Thrace are absolutely free to address themselves either to the civil courts or the local Muftis. In case they choose the latter, the Sharia law is implemented to the extent that its rules are not in conflict with fundamental values of the Greek society and the Greek legal and constitutional order. In this respect, courts shall not enforce decisions of the Muftis which are contrary to the Greek Constitution or international human rights treaties. Greece elaborates on the appropriate way to accommodate preferences and trends, within the majority of the Muslim minority on religious, social and legal matters without prejudice to its international legal obligations or the Greek Constitution and law.

Domestic violence (recommendations 83.31, 83.32)

56. Within the framework of the "National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women", the General Secretariat for Gender Equality has established and is implementing the following initiatives:

- a bilingual (Greek and English) SOS helpline 15900 and an email address sos15900@isotita.gr; since 2011, and until 31 December 2015, 23,005 telephone calls and 260 e-mails have been received;
- the operation of 40 Counselling Centres, in cooperation with the largest Municipalities);
- the operation by 19 large Municipalities and the National Centre for Social Solidarity of 21 shelters for abused women

57. During a period of less than 3 years of operation, 8,000 women have visited the abovementioned structures.

58. Instructions have been forwarded to all Police Services on how to deal with domestic violence incidents and handle victims and offenders. In 2014, 3,914 victims of domestic violence have been identified; 1,197 prosecutions have been initiated and 307 convictions handed down. In 502 cases, the victims opted for the procedure of criminal mediation which is provided in the context of restorative justice as an alternative, in order to avoid protracted and arduous court proceedings.

59. It is also to be noted that domestic violence crimes are prosecuted *ex officio*. The indigence benefit is provided to victims of domestic violence for lodging provisional measures and no fee is required for the lodging of a criminal complaint. Finally, a legislative working group has been established for the ratification of the CoE Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence.

Trafficking in human beings (recommendations 83.13, 83.33, 83.34, 83.35, 83.36, 83.37, 83.83, 84.12, 84.13)

60. In 2013, Greece ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (Law 4216/2013). Under Law 4198/2013 (which transposed a relevant EU Directive), the Office of the National Rapporteur (NRO) was established within the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The NRO has the mandate to cooperate closely with focal points in other competent Ministries as well as with the IOM and the accredited by the European Commission's Civil Society Platform NGOs in the field of anti-trafficking. The NRO is active in all four pillars of the strategy to combat trafficking (prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership with civil society and private sector).

61. The main priorities of the NRO are to improve and widen the scope of the country's identification regime, so as to involve more partners in first-level identification of victims and to increase the number of identified victims (i.e. to develop THB training in the First Reception Services, the Asylum Service, border & coast guards, labor inspectors, hospitals, supply chains), as well as to establish a systematically updated database of victims. The NRO has recently established the National Referral Mechanism, a platform for inter-agency cooperation, managed by the National Centre for Social Solidarity, on issues such as sheltering, compensation and safe return for the victims, and a Permanent Consultation Forum with civil society to ensure better cooperation among different stakeholders and better coordination of the available services offered by them. To address demand for labor trafficking, the NRO cooperates with the Labor Inspectorate for the implementation of trainings to labor inspectors. The NRO has also signed a MOU with the private sector that commits major private sector stake-holders to 'slave-free' supply chains. Furthermore, awareness-raising of the general public is an intrinsic part of Greece's anti-trafficking policy. A number of NGO projects, supported by the NRO, have gained access to schools to engage students in human rights education. Moreover, the NRO has recently launched several ongoing public awareness initiatives through the cultural sector. In this context, the NRO has organized a major transmedia festival under the title 'Break the Chain' in cooperation with international organizations and local counterparts.

62. Protective measures for children/unaccompanied minors have been implemented by various stakeholders. Various shelters operated by the State or NGOs offer protection to children that are in danger, including those who are victims of trafficking. Especially for children in danger, a number of helplines operate on a 24-hour basis (the National Helpline for Children "1107" by the National Center for Social Solidarity and the Helpline "1506"as

well as the Hotline for Missing Children "116000" operated by NGOs). More generally, victims of trafficking receive psycho-social support, psychotherapy, medical care and legal representation or assistance for voluntary repatriation. The support continues to transition period towards their social rehabilitation.

63. Specific actions have also been implemented by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction (such as the operation of a national telephone helpline for victims of trafficking, establishment of shelters for women victims of violence, incl. victims of trafficking the launching of an awareness raising campaign on gender-based violence, including trafficking in women).

64. The National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA), offers services such as emergency shelter, social and psychological support, longer term housing, mediation for the provision of health care, legal assistance and repatriation, as well as integration assistance, through a network of a 24-hour helpline, two shelters in Athens and one in Thessaloniki and Social Support Centers. Programs have also been implemented by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security within the scope of the EU EQUAL Initiative. Finally, there is a significant number of NGOs that provide shelters for accommodation, psycho-social and legal support to victims of trafficking, offered by specialized personnel.

65. For the police, prosecution of trafficking offences is a priority and the Specialized Anti-Trafficking Units are competent for the investigation of relevant cases. Investigations are always under the supervision of the First Instance Prosecutor, who is immediately informed and to whom the collected material is provided.

66. Through the recently established National Referral Mechanism (NRM), victims of trafficking are provided with free legal assistance in criminal proceedings and no fee is required for the lodging of a complaint. They may also be granted a residence permit. Finally, a Working Group for the improvement of coordination of law enforcement and criminal justice officers combatting trafficking is being set up. In 2014, 78 victims of THB were identified. In 2014, there were 15 criminal convictions and 10 acquittals. Extreme violence, as a means of coercion of victims for the purpose of their exploitation, has become less prevalent, which results in the underreporting of cases of trafficking to the authorities, a fact that underscores the pivotal role of the NRM and first-level identification in particular.

Accountability of law enforcement personnel (recommendations 83.38, 83.40, 83.41, 83.42, 83.46, 83.91, 83.44, 83.43)

67. The establishment of the "Office responsible for handling alleged instances of abuses" was foreseen by Law 3938/2011, as amended. Up to now, the staffing of the aforementioned Office has not been possible, mostly because of financial reasons. Article 10 of Law 4249/2014 enlarged the circle of persons who may be appointed as members of the three-member Committee of the Office, in order to render its operation possible with qualified persons wishing to offer their services. Constant efforts are being made for the prompt operation and the staffing of the Office, in conformity with the political leadership's explicit will. The NCHR, the Greek Ombudsman and CSOs have expressed their concerns about the fact that the Office has yet to start operating, as well as the latter's overall institutional structure.

68. By order of the Chief of the Hellenic Police dated 24.10.2012, the Internal Affairs Division of the Hellenic Police Headquarters undertakes, as a matter of absolute priority, the investigation of complaints made by foreign citizens (whether detained or not) alleging any form of ill-treatment by police officers, including those who were called to intervene in racist violence incidents against aliens.

69. Moreover, police officers are obliged to investigate whether offences under disciplinary investigation were motivated by racist hatred on the part of police officers displaying unlawful behavior against persons belonging to vulnerable ethnic, religious or social groups or against foreign citizens. In such cases, the findings of administrative investigations must obligatorily mention that the existence or not of racist motives has been explicitly ascertained. The Greek Ombudsman has stressed the need for acceleration and effectiveness of disciplinary investigations.

70. It is to be noted that the teaching of human rights is included, at all levels, in Police Schools' curricula. Further education programs, lectures, seminars, etc., are also regularly organized.

71. Finally, Greece has ratified in 2014 the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and designated the Office of the Ombudsman as the National Preventive Mechanism.

Conditions of detention (recommendations 83.45, 83.48, 83.49)

72. CSOs and the Greek Ombudsman have expressed their concerns about conditions of detention in prisons, as well as police detention facilities. The policy of the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights is to reduce prison overcrowding and effectively improve prison conditions, including the conditions for the social reintegration of detainees. The recent Law 4322/2015 on prison reform has led to a significant decrease in the number of inmates (from 12,808 on 16/12/2013 to 9,632 on 16/12/2015).

73. The reduction in the use of pre-trial detention is examined by the committees responsible for preparing the drafts of the new Penal Code and Code of Penal Procedure. Furthermore, the implementation of (pilot) electronic surveillance, which has begun in May 2015 (Presidential Decree 62/2014) and is provided, *inter alia*, as an alternative to remand detention, is expected to contribute to the reduction of the remand population.

74. Continuous efforts are being made to improve police detention facilities. It is to be noted that migrants under expulsion are held in police stations only in exceptional cases and for a short period of time, not exceeding five days. Foreigners under expulsion may be detained in Pre-Removal Detention Centers (see supra, para. 29).

Right to a fair trial (recommendations 83.47, 83.50, 83.51, 83.52)

75. During the last years, a number of laws have been adopted to rationalize, accelerate and improve the efficiency of judicial (civil, criminal and administrative) proceedings, issues which, along with the increase of litigation costs and the issue of ensuring the right to interpretation and translation, are also of concern to the NCHR and to CSOs. Law 4055/2012, in particular, provides for the acceleration of provisional judicial protection, establishes the procedure of judicial mediation and develops alternative methods of resolving private disputes. In criminal, civil and administrative law judicial procedures, reforms have been introduced aiming at court decongestion and trial time shortening, which have yielded positive results. The Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights focuses its current policy on the establishment of a modern system of managing the workload of the courts in order, in particular, to harmonize the judicial practice with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

76. In order to ensure effective access to justice, the law exempts from the obligation to pay a fee for the lodging of a criminal complaint alleged victims of racist crimes, domestic violence, crimes of sexual violence and sexual exploitation, etc. Moreover, no fee is required for crimes which are prosecuted *ex officio*, usually the most serious crimes.

Protection of freedom of religion or belief (recommendations 83.53, 83.54, 83.64, 84.15)

77. The Greek authorities are taking the necessary steps for the construction of a mosque in the Municipality of Athens, in a plot of land owned by the State, to be financed exclusively by national funds. In 2014, the Council of State (Supreme Administrative Court) found that the legislative framework providing for the funding by the State of construction of the mosque does not violate the principles of equality and freedom of expression of religious belief, but protects instead the rights of persons of Muslim religion (judgment no. 2399/2014). A further decision of the Council of State on environmental issues relating to the construction of the mosque is pending. CSOs have expressed their concerns about the non-completion of the construction of the mosque, as well as the lack of burial places for Muslims, outside, in particular, the region of Thrace.

78. Every year since August 2011, the Hellenic Government, with the cooperation of all competent Ministries, cedes for free the use of two housed places in Peace and Friendship stadium and the Olympic Sports Center (the most important sports venues of the capital) as well as many other smaller facilities in municipalities all over Greece during the celebration of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr) and the Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha) for all Muslims wishing to participate.

79. A joint circular was issued in May 2014 to clarify and provide guidance on the implementation of the legislation on the granting of a permit to establish and operate places of worship of religious communities other than the Orthodox Church. The said circular, while fully respecting the right of persons belonging to a religious community to practice freely and without any impediment their religion, aims at ensuring, through appropriate regulations, both the safety and protection of those gathering in the place of worship and the safety and quality of life of those living nearby, thus safeguarding and promoting social peace and mutual understanding.

80. Law 4301/2014 introduced a new form of legal personality, open to religious communities and their organizations in the country. Such communities may obtain the status of "religious legal persons", if they so wish, by submitting before the competent court a request for registration, signed by at least 300 members of a religious community. The decision to register a "religious legal person" is taken by the court, without government interference. At least 3 "religious legal persons" may associate to form an "ecclesiastical legal person". The legal personality of the Catholic Church in Greece and some other existing churches and their legal entities has been recognized *ex lege*. Religious communities which do not wish to seek the status of "religious legal persons" may obtain a legal status under the general provisions of the Civil Code or operate as unions of persons.

81. The Government and the regional or municipal authorities are aware of the request, by representatives of a cultural association in Thessaloniki, to have a mosque opened there. This is being examined also within Greece's broader policy and programmes on the restoration and use of Islamic monuments in the Greek territory during the Ottoman era. Last year, students of the Hayriye Koranic School (madrasah) of Komotini visited the Yeni Cami Mosque in Thessaloniki and organized there a Muslim prayer. Furthermore at the same mosque a prayer was organized on the occasion of the festivities for the Seker

Bayrami/Eid al-Fitr, in August 2013. Moreover, the city of Thessaloniki has authorized the use of the same mosque for the celebration of the end of Ramadan in 2014.

Rights of persons belonging to minorities (recommendations 83.55, 83.61, 84.17)

82. As explained in Greece's first-cycle UPR report, the only officially recognized minority in Greece is the Muslim minority in Thrace, whose status was established by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. The Muslim minority consists of three distinct groups whose members are of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin, the Muslim faith being the common denominator of the aforementioned distinct components. Each of these groups has its own spoken language, cultural traditions and heritage, which are fully respected by the Greek state. Further to fully complying with the Lausanne Treaty, Greece's policy and legislation, over the last twenty five years, reflect and implement contemporary human rights norms and standards.

83. Greece fully respects the right of each person to self-identify as they wish and no disadvantage results from such an expression of wish. In keeping with the principle of individual self-identification, everyone living in Greece is free to declare their origin, speak their language, exercise their religion and observe their particular customs and traditions. Persons belonging to groups who do not fulfill the criteria set out in international law for their recognition as "minorities" fully enjoy their human rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of association and peaceful assembly, under the conditions set out in the relevant universal and regional human rights treaties.

84. During the reporting period, Greece has continued to implement measures to protect, preserve and promote the rights of the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace.

85. Law 4115/2013 made possible, for the first time, the teaching of the Holy Koran in Greek public schools in Thrace, on an optional basis, to minority students, who continue to show a clear preference for the public educational system. The Koran teachers are selected through a transparent and inclusive procedure, chaired by the local Mufti, in which participate eminent Muslim personalities. The abovementioned preachers have the right to freely choose whether to join this scheme and enjoy an enhanced status, with social security benefits. Law 4115/2013 does not affect the status of Imams in Thrace, who are selected in accordance with the Islamic law, the traditions and practices of the Muslim minority, without any State interference, and freely exercise their religious duties.

86. The adoption of law 4310/2014 was a major step in the effort to ensure quality education to the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace. More specifically, the law ensures that the teaching positions of the minority programme of minority schools will be occupied exclusively by members of the Muslim minority, to be adequately trained at the Department of Primary Level Education at the University of Alexandroupolis. Thus, teachers of the minority educational programme in minority schools will have, in addition to the skills and knowledge that the teachers of public schools have, sufficient expertise in the language and in the Muslim religion that such position requires. Obviously, the abovementioned teachers are entitled to appointment in any public schools across the country.

87. The Greek Government is considering ways and means of executing three judgments of the European Court of Human Rights finding a violation of the right to freedom of association under the European Convention on Human Rights. Full implementation of the said judgments is pending, due to procedural reasons identified by the competent courts, not related to the statute or the activities of any particular association, namely the lack of a procedural avenue for the reopening of civil law cases following an ECHR judgment

finding a violation of the Convention. It is to be noted that the decision to register an association falls within the exclusive remit of the courts, exercising in this respect a control of the legality only, and not a review of the appropriateness or expediency, on an ad hoc basis, with no government interference. In December 2015, the ECHR dismissed two new complaints brought before it by two of the aforementioned three associations, alleging further violations of freedom of association. CSOs have stressed the importance attached to the execution of ECHR's judgments, including those concerning the three abovementioned associations.

88. It is to be stressed that the competent courts have already harmonized their practice with the relevant European Convention standards. Furthermore, in Thrace there is a thriving civil society comprising a large number of Muslim minority associations and NGOs that have been registered by the competent courts and operate unimpeded. Since January 2008, more than 50 minority associations have been registered.

Promotion and protection of the rights of the Roma (recommendations 83.62, 83.63)

89. The situation of Roma in Greece continues to present challenges to the authorities, as documented, in particular, by the Greek Ombudsman, the NCHR and CSOs. Inadequate housing conditions, risk of poverty and social exclusion, high school dropout rates are, according to different stakeholders, among the main problems faced by the Roma population, which have been exacerbated by the economic crisis.

90. To address these challenges, and in the EU framework, Greece launched the National Strategic Framework for Roma in 2011, aiming at combating discrimination and social exclusion of the Roma by adopting or further developing a comprehensive approach to Roma integration in the areas of access to education, employment, health care and housing. Twelve out of thirteen Regions of Greece have developed Regional Strategies for Roma Integration, focusing on the specific needs of the Roma in their territories. Furthermore, all the Regional Operational Programs incorporated the investment priority "Socio-economic inclusion of marginalized communities such as the Roma".

91. More specifically, in the field of housing, the development and improvement of basic infrastructures in Roma settlements forms the main measure promoted so far; the relevant actions, supported by the European Regional Development Fund, have benefited 20,000 persons. A database of Roma settlements, to be systematically updated by all local authorities, is currently being prepared. It is clear that the State has not designed and does not implement a policy of forced evictions. With regard to employment, projects such as "Local Employment Pacts" and "Local Integrated Interventions for vulnerable groups" ran between 2013-2015 and involved either actions addressed exclusively to Roma persons or integrated actions between Roma and other vulnerable groups, benefiting 883 Roma persons. Moreover, Support Centers for Roma and other vulnerable social groups provide a net of services such as counseling and supporting families, vocational training, promotion of public health, health education and access to primary health services, as well as horizontal actions for removing stereotypes against Roma. In the field of health, the project "*Health for the Greek Roma*" ran between 2005-2013 and provided medical examinations, inoculations and psycho-social support services through visiting camps or mobile units of the Disease Prevention Centre (KEELPNO).

92. In the field of education, the Ministry of Education has continued to implement special programmes, taking into consideration the particular needs of the Romani population and the prejudice or exclusion that Roma children might face during their schooling. The main axes of the Roma education policy are reflected in the program

"Education of Roma children". Moreover, at the beginning of every school year, a Circular is issued by the Ministry reminding all Heads of School Units of their obligation to enrol Roma pupils in Primary Schools. However, there are still some cases of Roma pupils attending *de facto* segregated schools. The Ministry of Education is committed to continuing its efforts to include Roma children in all levels of education and to overcoming the existing difficulties.

93. It also to be noted that Roma families with low income can benefit from an annual allowance for every child enrolled in public school of compulsory education which can be granted to them only at the end of each school year, upon submission of a certificate of regular school attendance.

Transparency (recommendation 83.56)

94. The "Transparency" ("Diavgeia") Program aims to achieve maximum publicity of government policy and administrative activity, ensuring transparency and consolidation of responsibility and accountability on the part of institutions exercising public power. Since October 1st, 2010, all government institutions are obliged to upload their acts and decisions on the Internet. In principle, administrative acts and decisions are not valid unless published online.

Freedom of expression and the press

95. The recent Law 4356/2015 amended Law 1178/81 on the civil liability of the press and abolished the minimum amount of compensation for non-pecuniary damage in case of publications that offend the honor and reputation of a person. The abolished provision had been criticized for endangering freedom of the press. Moreover, CSOs have raised concerns about the implementation of hate speech legislation and of blasphemy criminal provisions that may pose threats to freedom of expression.

IV. Key national priorities, initiatives and commitments that the State concerned has undertaken and intends to undertake to overcome those challenges and constraints and improve human rights situations on the ground

96. Among the main priorities of the Government in the field of human rights are the following:

- to continue its efforts to mitigate the negative results of the economic crisis and of austerity measures affecting mainly the most disadvantaged groups of the population;
- to finalize the Action Plan on the Rights of the Child; key priorities in this field include addressing the effects of the economic crisis on children, enhancing the protection of unaccompanied minors, modernizing family law to further safeguard the best interests of the child, etc.;
- to continue combatting racism, hate crimes and hate speech, including through the National Board against Racism and Intolerance (to be established), which will develop a comprehensive national strategy in the form of an Action Plan against

Racism and Intolerance, to improve reporting and recording of hate crimes and to design a monitoring mechanism on hate speech;

- to accelerate the administration of justice, improve all judicial procedures, enhance access to justice and avoid secondary victimization;
- as regards correctional policy, to stabilize prison population within prison capacity levels, to improve detention conditions, restructure the provision of health care, strengthen services for drug addicted prisoners and for the social reintegration of released prisoners, further develop correctional staff training, enhance the use of alternative to custody measures and develop a comprehensive system for the penal treatment of juveniles and youth in the community;
- to operate an effective, independent mechanism for investigating allegations against law enforcement personnel;
- to legislate legal gender recognition;
- to evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan on Human Rights and develop new priorities accordingly;
- to improve human rights education.